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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Hungary

SUBJECT Status of Hungarian Science to mid 1949

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DATE (OF INFO.) 1945 - 1949

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1. The national policy towards science up to 1948 was not geared towards influencing youth or directing them to undertake scientific study. The government did allot funds for laboratory construction and for equipment, but as I recall, didn't interfere with programming, with the curriculum or with the student. By the end of 1948, a change in the government's attitude was perceptible. The changeover to education under the "Peoples' Government" was slow. [redacted] it began with isolated cases where university professors were prosecuted under the guise of opposition to the forward march of the new system. One of these cases involved a professor under whose direction I studied physical chemistry. This professor, Noray Szabo was tried in 1948 and found guilty as charged of conspiring against the government. He was sentenced to five years at hard labor. The consensus of opinion (expressed covertly) among students and professors was that Noray Szabo and others were examples of what could occur to any of the educators or students who in any way opposed the government. By early 1949 it was evident that university organization and planning was being systematically planned to take its place in the new nationalized state.
2. Incentive for research during the winter of 1948 and the early months of 1949 was not great, particularly when pressure from Communist quarters began to develop. No matter what our top flight people produced, they were constantly made aware that the USSR scientists were far more advanced than Hungarian scientists. This ridicule, perhaps intended to spur our scientists to greater effort, did not have that effect. They, of course, continued their work but began to feel less independent and somewhat thwarted.
I can recall that a great deal of independent engineering research remained unpublished in early 1949.
3. A shortage of technical and scientific personnel was evident in 1949. If my memory is correct, the primary shortage was in mechanical engineers. This shortage was evidenced by the fact that many of the very top industrial positions in Hungarian technical industries had been filled through Communist patronage. In

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- 2 -

some cases second and third rate technicians had been placed in key positions because they were considered politically reliable. Such handling of personnel affected the output of industry. [redacted] one installation in particular, where research and experiment suffered greatly because of incapable leadership. An unskilled machine operator whose name I cannot recall was made director of the largest experimental farm in Hungary, Hortobogyt Minifgazdasag near Debreceen in 1948. [redacted] Due to his lack of knowledge, plus his new found power, he impeded production and research to a great extent.

4. Perhaps the most influential person in the Ministry of Industry in early 1949 was Professor Pal Benedek. This fellow is now [1953] about 35 years of age, stands 5'9" and weighs about 150 pounds. Benedek, of Jewish extraction, is slightly bald with some blond hair. I understood that he was in charge of industrial planning for the Hungarian government. He serves Hungary in a dual capacity in that he serves in the Ministry of Industry and has the rank of Assistant Professor at the Technical University. It was generally accepted that Benedek was a strong and loyal Communist and a leading party member.

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- 2 -